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HELPDESK QUERY:

Undertake a rapid review of the evidence with respect to:

- Decentralised service delivery and improved outcomes
- The impact of structured teacher guides/scripted lessons on learning outcomes
- The impact of contracting out to management agents on service delivery outcomes.

This report was completed as part of HEART's helpdesk service for the UK's Department for International Development. Although this report differs from the usual helpdesk format, it is published here as part of HEART's service to the international development community.

1. Theory of Change for a Decentralised Approach to Improving Education Outcomes

Political', administrative' and fiscal' decentralisations are terms used to classify three different types or dimensions of decentralisation.

<i>Political</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Refers to situations where political power and authority has been partially transferred to sub-national levels of government. ▪ Manifests through election and empowerment of sub-national forms of government ranging from village councils to state level bodies. ▪ Devolution is considered a form of political (democratic) decentralisation.
<i>Administrative</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aims to transfer decision-making authority, resources and responsibilities for the delivery of a select number of public services, or functions from the central government to other (non-elected) levels of government, agencies or field offices of central government line agencies. ▪ Associated with three possible variants, each having different characteristics: (i) de-concentration, (ii) delegation, and (iii) divestment, which relates to the privatisation of functions and services. ▪ Often part of civil service reform and is generally perceived as the narrowest form of decentralisation because local institutions to which tasks are transferred are not based on political representation controlled from below.
<i>Fiscal</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Refers to resource reallocation to sub-national levels of government, including the delegation of funds within sector ministries to the de-concentrated levels. ▪ Arrangements often negotiated between central and local authorities based on several factors, including inter-regional equity), availability of resources at all levels of government and local fiscal management capacity.

Decentralisation reforms hold many promises – including local level democratisation, responsiveness to local preferences and possibly improved service delivery for the poor. However, implementation often lacks behind the rhetoric. Effective delivery of promises depends on a range of country specific contexts as well as the internal coherence and quality of reforms. Decentralisation reforms are pursued in an uneven manner – some elements of the government may wish to undertake substantial reforms, other elements will intentionally or unintentionally counter such reforms. Different forms of decentralisation – foremost elements of devolution, de-

concentration and delegation - may be undertaken in a contradictory manner, and it is a continuous process.^{1 2}

Certain studies in Africa that compare the dynamics of centralisation/decentralisation have revealed discrepancies between the public or official rationale for the (re)distribution of power and the probable or eventual effect of this (re)distribution on educational processes and learning outcomes.^{3 4} Others have stressed that while it is important to safeguard the rights of individuals, including the right to mobilise, even around narrow sectional interests, it is equally important that the decentralised system recovers the capacity to hold individual schools to account and builds the capacity of the disadvantaged to participate more effectively within the system.⁵

A Study in Ghana argues that much of the theoretical and policy expectations on representation and participation in education by community members are only evident in form, but not as intended in practice. The extent of community participation appears to be shaped by a 'social contract' based on the principle of reciprocity of roles between the community and schools, and that increasingly teachers feel accountable to the traditional hierarchical educational structure, and not to the community.⁶ A South African study argues similarly that the realisation of decentralisation policy in education has to contend with the realities of local politics of influence in the community, and tap into the positive side of this influence to improve education service delivery.⁷

Debates about decentralisation have permeated and affected educational planning in the last 20 or so years.⁸ A group of reforms (educational restructuring) is being globalized, including introduction or reinforcement of freedom of choice, privatisation, decentralisation and sometimes centralisation of goal formulation, curriculum, and outcomes-based assessment. Although an important component of this package, decentralisation alone is not sufficient to make such governance work. Whether a positive impact will be achieved or not depends on the context in which decentralisation occurs and the design and implementation of decentralisation. The context refers to (i) the country setting (population density, the existing state of infrastructure, the level of income and the extent of inequality); (ii) social institutions that might encourage or constrain participation by excluded groups; (iii) the capacity of local actors; and (iv) the political power structure and culture. The design and implementation of decentralisation refers to (i) the ability and willingness to carry out reforms; (ii) the extent of transparency and participation; (iii) whether or not a decentralised government is subject to elite capture and (iv) policy coherence. Table 1 summarises some of the basic conditions for effective decentralisation.

¹ 'Decentralisation' can take on very different meanings and it is important to be aware of these interpretations because different types of decentralisation have very different characteristics, policy implications and conditions for success.

² Tidemand, P. and Steffensen, J. (2010). *Source Material on Decentralisation and Improved Service Delivery for the Poor*. DANIDA.

³ Berkhout, S. (2005). The Decentralisation Debate: Thinking about Power. *Review of Education*, 51:313–327 Springer.

⁴ Geo-Jaja, M. (2004). *Decentralisation and Privatisation of Education in Africa: Which Option for Nigeria?* International Review of Education, 51: 307–323.

⁵ Sayed, Y. and Soudien, C. (2005). Decentralisation and the Construction of Inclusion Education Policy in South Africa. *Compare*, 35:2, 115–125.

⁶ Essuman, A. and Akyeampong, K. (2011). Decentralisation Policy and Practice in Ghana: the Promise and Reality of Community Participation in Education in Rural Communities. *Journal of Education Policy*, 26:4, 513–527.

⁷ Heystek, J. (2011). School Governing Bodies in South African Schools: Under Pressure to Enhance Democratization and Improve Quality. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 39:4, 455-468.

⁸ Caillods, F. (1999). Preface. In: N. McGinn and T. Welsh (Eds.), *Decentralization of Education: Why, When, What and How?* UNESCO, Paris.

Table 1. Summary of basic conditions for effective decentralisation

Aspect	Details
Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Many stakeholders influence decentralisation processes: each with different incentives for reforms so why are reforms undertaken? Who are key supporters and key opponents of reform? And who is likely to benefit from the reforms?
Legal framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is the framework in place that clearly stipulates the division of roles and responsibilities between different layers of governments? ▪ Are significant responsibilities assigned to local government so that it can play a role in poverty alleviation? ▪ Are the assignments of responsibilities in accordance with local capacities and is it possible to transfer functions?
Financial resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are there adequate resources in place to undertake the proposed functions? ▪ Can adequate finances be provided by local revenue sources, fiscal transfers (more or less conditional) and borrowing? ▪ Is there some fiscal autonomy to ensure that potential benefits of decentralisation can materialise?
Human resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are there adequate staff numbers, qualifications, motivation, etc. to undertake functions? ▪ What kind of local autonomy for staff management is desirable to e.g. ensure local level accountability but also guarantee technical competence, staff motivation and fiscal discipline?
Effective mechanisms for local-level accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is local election of local government councillors viable? ▪ How do citizens and politicians access information; what institutional arrangements are in place for politicians' oversight of planning, finances, staff; and how are they influenced by political structures, civil society organisations, among others?
Central institutional arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are there functioning robust central organisations such as a reform secretariat, a strong Ministry of Local Government, an Association of Local Authorities, or Local Government Finance Commission?

Compiled from relevant websites with information on decentralisation including:

www.gsdrc.org/index.cfm?objectid=DD973312-14C2-620A-273F8E66B2685F82

www.decentralization.org

www.worldbank.org/publicsector/decentralization

www1.worldbank.org/prem/

<http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/topic/2026>

www.uncdf.org/english/local_development/docs/thematic_papers/0510_Delivering/index.php

www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/governance/decentralisation-and-local-government

2. Theory of Change for a Direct Instruction (DI) Lesson Approach

There are several different labels for what we refer to as 'explicit instruction', including effective instruction, systematic teaching, and active teaching.⁹ Conceptually, one can view explicit instruction as a specific form of what Slavin (1994) calls a direct instruction (DI) lesson.¹⁰ Critical features of DI lessons include highly sequenced instruction, clear and concise directions, teacher guidance, active student participation, and assessment probes in order to practice and master new knowledge and skills. There are seven sequential parts to a DI lesson: a) gain learner's

⁹ Rosenshine, B. and Stevens, R. (1996). *Teaching Functions*. In M. Wittrock (ed.), *Handbook of Research on Teaching* (3rd ed.) (pp. 376-391). New York: Macmillan.

¹⁰ Slavin, R. E. (1994). *Educational Psychology*, (4th ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Baco.

attention, b) review prerequisites, c) present new content, d) probe learning, e) provide independent practice, f) assess performance and provide feedback, and g) provide distributed practice and review. Explanations for each step in a DI lesson are presented within the framework of developing a scripted lesson. Typically, scripted lessons are planned for teaching academic skills that comprise a series of chained behaviours such as spelling words and maths computation, as well as discrete behaviours such as sight vocabulary and maths facts. In essence, a teacher would plan a scripted lesson for acquisition of knowledge and skills where there are definitive steps to completing the academic task.

Specific evidence of the effectiveness of the use of this specific DI approach being used by teachers in formal and informal classrooms in developing countries and extrapolation as to how teacher education (curriculum and practicum) and the school curriculum and guidance materials can best support this DI approach vary. This is primarily because the overall strength of the body of evidence is moderate and the available studies are not directly comparable, with different aims and research methods and a variety of outcome indicators to assess effective pedagogic practices. Further, searching for this review confirmed that many of the terms and categories used to describe pedagogical theory and practice are contested and subject to multiple interpretations and uses.

The evidence is strongest in the consistency of findings on the extent to which teachers are able to implement the pedagogical strategies and practices envisaged by reforms and training. There is also convergence in how studies report that curriculum and teacher education can best support effective practices. However, there is less robust evidence of the way these strategies and practices impact on student learning outcomes, as few studies used baseline and post-tests or school or national student achievement data, and many used greater student engagement and confidence as general but not rigorously evidenced indicators.

There is evidence from the USA that scripted literacy programmes have had a positive impact in a randomised control trial (RCT) that examined the learning of pre-service teachers taking an initial Early Literacy course in an early childhood education (ECE) programme. Findings indicate that all pre-service teachers demonstrated similar gains in knowledge, but pre-service teachers in the Tutor Assisted Intensive Learning Strategies (TAILS) programme demonstrated broader and deeper application of knowledge and higher self-ratings of preparedness to teach reading. Students in both conditions made similar comprehension gains, but students tutored with TAILS showed significantly stronger decoding gains.¹¹

This evidence compares strongly with the 2013 DFID-funded literature review that stated that *“Teacher manuals with scripted lessons were cited as supporting the translation of newly acquired theoretical knowledge into concrete practice in three studies, by Arkorful (2012 H/H Int), Coffey International (2012 H/H Int) and NCERT (2011 H/H Int), and we have seen earlier how such teacher guides support teachers in teaching a more varied lesson sequence. This may also reduce the need to recall large amounts of unnecessary information, which these unqualified teachers may find challenging.”*¹²

¹¹Al Otaiba, S., Lake, V. E., Greulich, L., Folsom, J. S. and Guidry, L. (2010). *Preparing Beginning Reading Teachers: An Experimental Comparison of Initial Early Literacy Field Experiences*. Springer Science+Business Media B.V.

¹²Westbrook J., Durrani N., Brown R., Orr D., Pryor J., Boddy J. and Salvi F. (2013). *Pedagogy, Curriculum, Teaching Practices and Teacher Education in Developing Countries: Final Report*. Education Rigorous Literature Review. London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.

The International Initiative for Impact Evaluation Study (2013) also reported that the provision of learning materials can help children follow along with a teacher's instructions. New materials can also help teachers with their lessons. When integrated into the everyday curriculum, they can become a useful, effective way of encouraging students to learn. Improving school quality with additional resources can also increase school enrolment by encouraging students to go to school so that they can use the new materials. Providing materials has some positive impact on test scores, but no effects are seen on school enrolment, attendance and progression.¹³

For purposes of extracting evidence of what works, DI implementation is conceptualised here as involving changes in education processes at two levels – systemic and schools – with a particular focus here on a summary of the evidence as to what innovations are required for successful implementation at the systemic level (see Table 2).¹⁴

Table 2. Summary of evidence for the implementation of the DI approach

Feature	Aspect	Evidence of Findings to support the DI approach
Policy Formulation	<i>Gaining agreement on purposes of education</i>	Policy dialogue is needed to agree on purpose of education and DI by all stakeholders – focusing on outcomes, future employment, academic learning and life skills, reading, writing and arithmetic, age-appropriate ¹⁵
	<i>Developing and implementing an integrated curriculum</i>	Clear guidelines provided for teachers to use integrated curriculum in practice, to improve student learning
Programmatic Development	<i>Integrating DI into the education system</i> ¹⁶	DI is scaled up from pilot programmes or projects and incorporated into the education system, over multiple years
Resource Allocation	<i>Costing and providing funding for DI</i>	To promote DI as a feasible alternative to traditional approaches, implementers need to highlight the cost-effectiveness of the interventions, for obtaining and mainstreaming funding. ¹⁷
Development of Teaching/Learning Materials (TLM)	<i>Teacher-led TLM development</i>	The act of educators creating teaching materials and then having other teachers review and critique them in teachers' circles empower teachers, helps them become invested in the implementation of the reform Well planned and produced self-study materials focused on subject knowledge but including practical activities can support teacher learning at a distance; new technology shows much potential but should only be used where realistically and reliably accessible to user ¹⁸
Pre-Service Teacher Training	<i>School based training</i>	SGSL programmes will find value to move the training directly into the schools and possibly use of videotapes of model SGSL teaching in training ¹⁹

¹³ Krishnaratne, S., White, H. and Carpenter, E. (2013). *Quality Education for All Children? What Works in Education in Developing Countries*. Working Paper 20. New Delhi: International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie).

¹⁴ Gunter, P., Venn, M. and Hummel, J. (2004). *Teacher-made Scripted Lessons*. Chapter in D. Moran and R. Malott (Eds), *Evidence-based educational methods*. San Diego, CA: Elsevier Academic Press.

¹⁵ Barrow, K. and Leu, E. (2006). *Cross-National Synthesis of Education Quality Report No. 1*. Washington, DC: USAID Education Quality Improvement Project 1.

¹⁶ For example, in the State of Tamil Nadu (India), ABL was expanded over a 5-year period from 13 city schools (Chennai) in 2003 to all 37,500 publically-supported primary schools in the State in 2008. By comparison, "Escuela Nueva" in Colombia was piloted in a few schools in 1973, with step-wise expansion to 18,000 schools nationwide by 1989 (a 15-year time frame).

¹⁷ Mogollón, O. and Solano, M. (2011). *Active Schools: Our Convictions for Improving Quality of Education*. Edited by A. Flórez, FHI 360; Kline, R, 2012, A model for improving rural schools: Escuela Nueva in Colombia and Guatemala. *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, Vol.2(2)

¹⁸ Orr, D., Westbrook, J., Pryor, J., Durrani, N, Sebba, J. and Adu-Yeboah, C. (2013). *What are the Impacts and Cost-effectiveness of Strategies to Improve Performance of Untrained and Under-trained Teachers in the Classroom in Developing Countries*. AusAid Systematic Review.

¹⁹ Coffey International Development (2012). *Activity based learning, Ghana*. Draft synthesis report for DfID. Reading.

In-service professional development	<i>Professional development and active learning</i>	Local and state government and/or international organisations organised school-based continuous professional development (CPD)
Pedagogical Support	<i>Training local supervisor</i>	Newly trained teachers are observed and obtain feedback from teacher trainers, head teachers, and mentor teachers ²⁰
Teacher Assessment and Incentives	<i>Regularly assessing teachers' practices</i>	On-going, useful feedback is provided to both students and teachers, on what students have learned
	<i>Providing teacher incentives</i>	Teachers in successful SGSL programmes need involvement in a range of mechanisms to empower them
Student Assessment	<i>Conducting regular formative assessment</i>	On-going student assessments are used address any gaps in learning that are revealed
Community Engagement	<i>Involving the community and parents</i>	Cooperative relationship with parents, teachers, other schools and community not just providing resources but invited for school visits and mobilisation activities

Further research that will be very useful to the measurement of the impact of scripted lessons would include studies in remote rural schools, with large classes and the uncertainties of teacher and student presence; on the social, economic and cultural backgrounds of students' homes in relation to the DI pedagogy; on teachers' practices at different levels, looking at continuities with the primary curriculum and pedagogies; and on comparing experienced and novice teachers or looking at the transition that novice teachers make in becoming more effective due to use of the DI approach.²¹

3. Theory of Change for Service Delivery through Management Agents

For DFID, given the UK's commitment to strengthening service delivery by the state, one of the central dilemmas is how to spend money effectively through country systems. It needs to work with the responsible authorities and support them in policy-making, planning and budgeting – including for recurrent expenditure like salaries. Working with and through country systems, however, means exposing UK funds to the risks associated with unreliable budgetary processes and weak public financial management systems. So what are appropriate measures for distinguishing between effective and ineffective management organisations in aid programmes?

Available evidence is extremely modest in size, coverage and quality. Besides finding very few publications, there is limited evidence linking the impact of contracting out to management agents on tangible outcomes for improved education outcomes and poverty reduction. This should not be inferred to suggest that the linkages between effective outsourcing, poverty reduction and improved education service are weak, but rather, there is not much objective evidence of 'what works and why'. The reasons for this are caused by the challenges of conducting research on the topic and tracing attribution of socio-economic outcomes across a tangled web of multiple, interacting causative variables.

One means for assessing the evidence is to consider using the outsourcing through a management agent approach on the basis of its ability to address some of the main concerns from the evidence for the lack of effectiveness through using country systems or the sector-wide approach (SWAp). There is no consistently strong evidence that SWAps have been effective at achieving development outcomes in fragile contexts. Available evidence is mixed, partly because

²⁰ Such support was noted as "perhaps the most crucial component of Escuela Nueva's success" (Rojas, 1994).

²¹ Westbrook, J., Durrani, N., Brown, R., Orr, D., Pryor, J., Boddy, J. and Salvi, F. (2013).

of the uniqueness of each country's context.²² SWApS are generally considered to be most appropriate in relatively stable low-and middle-income countries, with national political leadership and institutional capacity considered to be prerequisites.²³ However, there is some evidence that if given sufficient time, a mature SWAp can contribute to stabilisation and state-building processes. Processes of decentralisation can either enhance or undermine state-building objectives depending on context.²⁴ Specifically, there is also evidence that using an outsourced management approach:

- does not lead to increased transaction costs and little or no evidence of increased expenditure on front-line services;²⁵
- can assist in mitigating against low levels of local capacity across all core government systems including planning, resource allocation, procurement, financial management and monitoring;
- offers a better opportunity to engage in partnerships with civil society and the private sector, and increases the levels of quality dialogue and accountability tracking;
- enables more predictable resource flows due to agreed costing and rigid accountability requirements;²⁶
- enhances transparency in resource allocation and increases DFID's immediate support for the education sector policy and resource allocation.

DFID Pakistan's Road Map approach provides a mixed government/management model in which financial aid is integrated with extensive political dialogue, technical support, funding for research and innovation and a set of interventions designed to generate social pressure for change. The ICAI Report (2012) applauded the use of complementary interventions and aid modalities and it was particularly pleased with the way that large-scale financial support in education is supported by additional investment in *technical support, knowledge generation and mobilising community support for improved services*.²⁷ Table 3 highlights the main benefits and gaps on the Pakistan Education Road Map approach.

Table 3. Benefits and Gaps of the Education Road Map

Pros	Gaps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Analysis of the political landscape and taking on policy influence as a structured campaign. ▪ Using data generated by the provincial government's own monitoring system, which includes monitoring officers visiting public schools every two months. ▪ Generation of a 'heat map' of school performance by district which (i) provides a real-time picture of the performance of the education system across the province; (ii) breaks down results by district thus drawing attention to underperformers; and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If there is any gap in this theory of change, it was that the education authorities appeared to need more hands-on support with managing the complex processes of institutional change required to achieve their goals. ▪ The information generated does not of itself assist the province with managing the complex institutional changes involved in improving education outcomes.

²²Pearson, M. (2010). *Impact Evaluation of the Sector Wide Approach (SWAp), Malawi*. DFID.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67670/imp-eval-sect-wde-appr-mw.pdf

²³ Vaillancourt, D. (2012). *In Sweet Harmony? A Review of Health and Education Sectorwide Approaches (SWApS) in the South Pacific, Desk Study, Appendix 1: Samoa Education SWAp*. Washington, DC: World Bank. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2012/08/15/in-sweet-harmony-a-review-of-health-and-education-sectorwide-approaches-in-the-south-pacific>

²⁴ Boak, E. and Ndaruhutse, S. (2011). *The Impact of Sector-wide Approaches: Where from, Where now and Where to?* CfBT Education Trust. <http://www.cfbt.com/en-GB/Research/Research-library/2011/r-the-impact-of-swaps-2011>

²⁵ McNee, A. (2012). *Rethinking Health Sector Wide Approaches Through the Lens of Aid Effectiveness*. Canberra: Development Policy Centre, Australian National University. doi:10.2139/ssrn.2041830

²⁶ Lucas, B. (2013). *Effectiveness of Sector-wide Approaches in Fragile Contexts*. GSDRC Helpdesk.

²⁷ Independent Commission for Aid Impact. Report 12, October 2012.

(iii) offers a very strong tool for promoting accountability.	
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The management team for this Road Map used the six rational performance management elements of 'Deliverology' that involve setting direction and context; establishing clear accountabilities and metrics; creating realistic budget plans and targets; tracking performance effectively; holding robust performance dialogue; and ensuring actions, rewards and consequences.²⁸

There is still the need for a conceptual framework or body of comparative evidence to guide the implementation and evaluation of effective management consulting for systemic improvement - a framework that documents the stages of engagement between development agencies, national education systems and consulting organisations and, for each stage, identifies key consulting competencies and behaviours, associated education system success factors and indicators of engagement productivity. Having a robust conceptual framework to guide management partners has the potential to increase the rigour and quality of services provided to education systems and, by extension, the positive impact of these partnerships on instruction and learning. In a political climate where each of these organisations (the development partner, the national government and the management agent) are asked to demonstrate value added to their governing boards, a robust framework can inform the development of concrete metrics that management organisations can use to improve internal processes as well as to report progress to external stakeholders.

²⁸ Barber, M., Moffit, A. and Kihn, P. (2010). *Deliverology 101 - A Field Guide for Educational Leaders*. 1000 Oaks. Corwin Press.